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AUTHOR Maloney, W. Paul; Hefzallah, Ibrahim M.
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ABSTRACT

Career education is a new approach that should be designed to develop a clear perspective of the students self and his role for a productive and satisfying life. Therefore, the initial and continuing priority in career education should focus on the student. It also necessitates career preparation for all students. The emphasis, however, should be shifted from job training to student self-awareness, and career choice is a by-product of self-awareness. In restructuring education to develop student self-awareness, five objectives have been identified and include: (1) recognition and articulation of individual differences and similarities, (2) recognition of changes in self and society, (3) decision-making based on critical thinking, (4) thrust for continued learning, and (5) constructive and satisfying use of leisure time. Concomitant with these objectives are the recognition of readiness, maturation, interest, and student participation in pre- and post-planning. Therefore, there must be transfer of potential achievement of these objectives to subsequent developmental stages to ensure the continued achievement of self-awareness throughout life. (Author/SB)

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W. Paul Maloney, Ed.D.
Fairfield University
Graduate School of Education

Ibrahim M. Hefzallah, Ph.D.
Fairfield University
Graduate School of Education

North Benson Road
Fairfield, Conn. 06430

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W. Paul Maloney, Ed.D.
Ibrahim M. Hefzallah, Ph.D.

CAREER EDUCATION: THE STUDENT IN FOCUS

During the past few years, there has been increased concern and criticism of the public school program and the preparation of youth for a satisfying and productive life. Among the most claimed and the most significant reasons proferred for this concern are the following:

(1) High unemployment among the youth. During the recent economic slowdown, the unemployment rates of high school graduates and dropouts reached twelve and twenty-one per-cent, respectively, while the over-all unemployment was in excess of six percent (Young, 1971).

(2) A large number of dropouts. The U. S. Office of Education estimated that, on the elementary and secondary school level during the academic year 1970-1971, there were 850,000 dropouts. On the college level in 1970-1971, there were 850,000 high school students who entered college in 1967 but did not complete the baccalaureate or an organized occupational program (U. S. Office of Education, 1971).

(3) The "myth of the college degree." Until the present, the "myth of the college degree" as the only road to occupational success has been perpetuated in the schools in spite of the fact that for many high school students the necessity of a college education is an unrealistic expectation. This fact

is demonstrated through many studies. For instance, in 1970-1971 there were 750,000 general curriculum high school graduates who did not attend college (U. S. Office of Education, 1971). Even for those students who entered community colleges, it was discovered that, although seventy-five percent reported that they planned to transfer to four-year colleges, twenty-five percent actually achieved a baccalaureate degree (NACVE, 1972). Similar results have been reported by Gleazer (1968) and Medsker and Tillery (1971). These results suggest that the student who does not attend a four-year college has been overlooked in the school. This omission of services to and interest in the non-college-bound has also been documented by Rosen (1970), Rhodes (1970), and Ginzberg (1971). Moreover, frequent educational reports (Marland, 1972; U. S. Office of Education, 1971; Toffler, 1971; Holt, 1972; Reich, 1971; and others) claim that the school program is dull and irrelevant to students' interest and needs.

(4) Occupational projections favor technical or vocational programs. The occupational projections for the next decade seem most advantageous for graduates of technical or vocational programs. Secretary of Labor Hodgson reported that eight out of ten jobs in the 1970's will be filled by individuals who do not have baccalaureate degrees. "Individuals with

vocational education beyond high school will be in the best position to compete for these positions" (U. S. Department of Labor, 1972). While these projections stand on the one hand, on the other hand, the Commissioner of Education has reported that eight out of ten students need occupational training, but two out of ten actually receive it (Marland, 1972).

The aforementioned documented claims dictate a need for educational reform. From the point of view of the U. S. Office of Education and many educators, emphasis on career education can bring about the desirable educational reform. The fundamental concept of career education, as pointed out by the U. S. Office of Education (1971), is that:

> ". . .all educational experiences, curriculums, instruction, and counseling should be geared to preparation for economic independence and an appreciation for the dignity of work. . . Career education recognizes critical decision points at which students must be prepared and equipped to decide whether to pursue a job, seek further education, or choose some combination of both. . .In scope, career education encompasses educational experiences beginning with early childhood and continuing through the individual's productive life." (2)

In the career education model suggested by the U. S. Office of Education, emphasis is placed upon the generation of viable alternatives and the restructuring of the curriculum to meet the career needs of youth. This model has three steps: career awareness, K-6; career exploration, 7-10; and career specialization in vocational, pre-technical, and college preparation, 11-12. According to this model, a student

completing the tenth grade would possess the skills for entry into a career cluster of his choice and could be gainfully employed. If, however, the student decided to continue his program in high school, he could combine education and work experience. His educational experience would encompass further specialization in his area of choice. The choice may be in an occupational cluster for employment after high school, or it may be the choice of a pre-tech program or college preparation. In any event, any one of these choices would be available and rest upon individual decision.

Fifteen occupational clusters have been identified. These clusters are: agri-business and natural resources, business and office, communication and media, consumer and homemaking education, construction, environment, fine arts and humanities, health, hospitality and recreation, manufacturing, marine science, marketing and distribution, personal services, public services, and transportation.

Pressed by the need for reforming education, the writers feel that many school systems might rush themselves into implementing the model of career education as outlined by the U. S. Office of Education without deep understanding of the various variables that would affect the success or the failure of such a reform. Among the variables requiring initial scrutiny before implementation of the career education model are the following: the student, the curriculum, the professionals (teachers, counselors, administrators), the public (parents and the com-

munity at large), and the schools' physical plant. For the purposes of this article, consideration will be given to the prime element--the student in career education. However, before we focus on the student, it seems imperative to point out requisite conditions that we believe are essential ingredients in the foundation of career education.

First, it should be noted that career education is not a panacea in the solution of the drop-out problem. Students drop out for a number of reasons. Among these reasons have been suggested the following: irrelevancy of the school experience to the immediate and long-range needs and goals of the students, lack of student readiness, lack of individualization of the educational program, unchallenging methods of teaching, and the lack of active student participation in their education. Lack of career training, therefore, is not the only reason for dropping out of school. This means that implementing career education as a solution of the drop-out problem without serious consideration to the aforementioned reasons would result in an inadequate resolution of the drop-out problem.

Second, career education cannot simply be instituted in a half-hearted incidental and/or ancillary approach in elementary and secondary schools. It requires the total revision or the restructuring of the curriculum, the implementation of the best known teaching and training techniques, and the provision for a rich, interesting, and challenging learning and training experience for all youth.

Third, career education necessitates career preparation for all students whether they are college- or non-college-bound students. Among the students continuing on to college, a large number has conformed to the expectations and demands of the present collegiate program with a rosey view of their future after completion of a degree program. Yet, even among many of these graduates, there is a feeling of dissatisfaction and lack of adequate understanding of themselves and their roles in society. Therefore, to suggest that the prime goal of career education is only for the non-college-bound is an oversimplification and a discriminatory practice. It is an oversimplification because it belies the purposes and goals of education in the broadest sense--preparation for a useful and satisfying life. It is also discriminatory because it does lead to an intellectual elitism on the one hand and the consequent denial of student potential on the other. Therefore, to structure a comprehensive career education program, equal attention should be given to non-college-bound and college-bound students. However, this condition cannot be met if career education centers around job training.

Fourth, career education should be centered around student self-awareness rather than job training for three reasons: (1) emphasizing job training in career education perverts education in the broadest sense in elementary and secondary school. (2) Shifting the emphasis from the "college degree myth" to job training does not help in meeting the varied interests, needs, and abilities of the individual

students. Both approaches are two extremes, and neither of them would help every individual student to realize his self and his role in society. (3) The prime goal of education should be developing student self-awareness. A free and a sound choice of career is a by-product of self-awareness. It should be noted that self-awareness is the attendant condition for a productive and satisfying life. In this sense, career education is a new approach that should be designed to develop a clear perspective of the student's self and his role for a productive and satisfying life. This entails that the initial and continuing priority in career education should focus on the student.

THE STUDENT IN FOCUS

In the above discussion we pointed out that career education necessitates career preparation for all students; however, the emphasis should be shifted from job training to student self-awareness, since a free career choice is, and should be, a by-product of self-awareness. Therefore, the issue is how do we re-structure education to develop the student's self-awareness and thereby his free choice of a career.

There is a pressing need to start a dialogue among interested and involved educators to develop more understanding of the concept and the implementation of career education. We believe that initial dialogue should focus upon self-awareness. In an attempt to stimulate dialogue on this issue, the writers are positing a definition of self-awareness

around which we feel career education should be structured.

To these writers, self-awareness is the articulation of one's values, interests, aptitudes, abilities, and the continuous dynamic interrelationships between these aspects of the self and the environment. From this definition it is evident that self-awareness is a dynamic and a lifetime goal. As one develops his values, interests, aptitudes, abilities, and his understanding of the continuous dynamic interrelationships between these aspects of the self and the environment, he is actually changing and developing his self-awareness.

In structuring education to foster and develop self-awareness, we believe that the following five objectives are relevant:

1. Recognition and articulation of individual differences and similarities in terms of aptitudes, values, interests, and abilities. While the importance of the recognition of individual differences is apparent for the teacher, little consideration has been devoted to appreciation of the differences and similarities on the part of the student. If there is to be self-definition, this would require recognition and articulation of normative and ideographic dimensions of personality. The logical extension of this recommendation would be appreciation of others and various occupations. This recognition would carry with it respect for one's own individuality and accord respect to others' individuality, unity through diversity. The differences and similarities would hopefully develop an appreciation of the world of work and assist in the

understanding of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of occupational clusters. On the vertical dimension there would be demonstrated the inter-relationship of the basic skills for an entry level occupation and an advanced position within that occupation, e.g., the nurse's aide and the doctor. On the horizontal dimension there would be demonstrated the inter-relationship among occupations which require similar skills.

Achieving the above objective would develop understanding of the need for unity and diversity in a dynamic technological society.

2. Recognition of changes in self and society. It has been aptly noted in much recent literature that change is characteristic of our dynamic society. The development of new technology has accelerated the rate of change in all aspects of life as noted by Toffler (1971) and others. The changes have been noted in the world of work in the number of new occupations which have developed in the past five years and the changes in the economy. For a student entering kindergarten today and graduating from college tomorrow, there will be numerous new jobs not yet invented.

While these changes have been apparent, there are also changes in the self which are all too often overlooked. Developmentally, there are radical changes in the biological, physical, and socio-cultural aspects of personality. Among these are the substantial and, in many cases, unanticipated changes from childhood to the quest for a sense of identity in adolescence and the attendant values and adult roles assumed after adolescence.

There are, therefore, changes within and outside of the individual. There are different modes of dealing with these changes; these modes are active, neutral, and passive. The individual may presumably seek and stimulate change within himself and society. The individual may be acceptant of change and be moved by change in himself and society without active participation. The passive individual may attempt to freeze the status quo or remain static. There are those who swim, those who float, and those who stay on the beach. The objective therefore should be developing student understanding of the dynamics of change, the three modes of change, and to develop mutual respect for people operating under the three modes of change. In all modes, there is the need for critical evaluation and anticipation of the consequences of change. This suggests the need for developing student ability in decision making.

3. Decision-making based on critical thinking. Educators are advocating decision-making ability as an important objective of general education, yet the achievement of this objective is left to incidental development. If career education is to foster self-awareness, decision-making ability based upon analytical thinking should be stressed. Continued self-awareness necessitates decisions about the self, the environment, and the inter-relation between the two. It would seem, therefore, that education in decision-making should be provided throughout the career education curriculum.

All too often, students are required to make decisions at critical points in development. Many of these decisions become, for all intents and purposes, irreversible, especially in the realm of career choice. Through preparation in decision-making, the students are educated to identify alternatives and therefcre are able to make a free choice based upon comprehensive, analytical, and evaluative thinking.

4. Thrust for continued learning. Self-awareness is a dynamic and continuous process that necessitates continued learning. To develop one's ability for self-renewal would entail the development of student motivation and skills for continued learning. Furthermore, in view of the exigencies of being a citizen in a continually changing environment and developing self, there seems to be a need for continued learning in both the broadest and narrowest senses. It is important that the individual keep pace with the new techniques, processes, and developments within his own area of competence in order to ensure this competence. This may be accomplished through additional training at employment, adult education, or community skills centers. The thrust for continued learning must encompass not only the narrow concept of work-related learning and skill upgrading. In addition, the individual as a responsible citizen must understand the dynamics of continued personal growth, learning, and development which facilitate additional in-depth relationships with others and provides more self-insight and understanding.

5. Use of leisure time. From much of the recent literature, the

projections for the next couple of decades suggest that more leisure time will be available in all sections of the occupational world. Some of the trends have been the shortening of the work-week from five to four or even three days, retirement at earlier ages--in the late fifties rather than sixties, and provisions for extended vacations and time off similar to sabbaticals in the educational profession. There is a correlation between self-awareness and purposeful use of leisure time; therefore, without adequate preparation for the constructive and purposeful use of leisure time, individuals would be liable to cease their self-awareness. The implications might be seen in crises in familial relationships and individual mental health. The important point is that people be prepared through the exploration of activities of a variegated nature, through active participation in many activities, and through the free choice of part-time activities.

SUMMARY

In summary, career education is a new approach that should be designed to develop a clear perspective of the student's self and his role for a productive and satisfying life. Therefore, the initial and continuing priority in career education should focus on the student. It also necessitates career preparation for all students. The emphasis, however, should be shifted from job training to student self-awareness. Career choice is a by-product of self-awareness. In re-structuring

education to develop student self-awareness, five objectives have been identified. These objectives are:

1. Recognition and articulation of individual differences and similarities
2. Recognition of changes in self and society
3. Decision-making based on critical thinking
4. Thrust for continued learning
5. Constructive and satisfying use of leisure time

Concommitant with these objectives are the recognition of readiness, maturation, interest, and student participation in pre- and post-planning. Therefore, there must be transfer of potential achievement of these objectives to subsequent developmental stages to ensure the continued achievement of self-awareness throughout life.

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